



Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma

## The Ducal Crown

September 2007

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NEWS BEAT



### PARMA FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 2,000 YEARS OF HISTORY

For four weekends during the month of September, visitors are invited to participate in the tenth annual Festival del Prosciutto di Parma. The main event: an opportunity to go behind the scenes in a dozen *prosciuttifici*, watching the *maestro salatore* (“salt master”) and other skilled artisans prepare and care for whole pork legs that will, after lengthy curing, become Prosciutto di Parma. It’s called Finestre Aperte (“open windows”) referring not only to the public tours, but to the traditional method that calls

for the long windows in a typical *prosciuttificio* to be opened whenever the weather permits, allowing aromatic breezes to flow over the hams—a step that contributes to the unique flavor of the hams.

Festival goers can also visit the the Prosciutto di Parma museum located in Langhirano’s ancient Forum Boarium. In the heart of the prosciutto-making production zone, they can trace the history of this illustrious ham back to the 2nd century B.C., when the Parma area became known for its hams. One “secret” of its success in antiquity was proximity to the high-quality sea salt needed to cure the hams. Historical documents show that, through the centuries, Prosciutto di Parma was displayed proudly on the tables of medieval nobility, Renaissance princes and prosperous merchants. Now, of course, this superb ham is appreciated all over the world.

The *prosciuttifici* and museum tours end, appropriately, with a tasting of Prosciutto di Parma and other salumi from the Parma area. For more information, visit [www.festivaldelprosciuttodiparma.com](http://www.festivaldelprosciuttodiparma.com).



## CUTTING-EDGE TRENDS



### SANDWICHES TOP THE DINNERTIME CHARTS

Americans have always eaten a lot of sandwiches. Right now the figure stands at a billion a year, give or take a few. But sandwiches seem to have entered a new phase of popularity, as indicated by the NPD Group's 21st Eating Patterns in America survey, which suggests that they are now the No. 1 dinnertime choice in America. A lot of burgers and BLTs are reflected in those numbers but the upswing in popularity also reflects the growing popularity of more sophisticated sandwiches —once-exotic fare such as the Vietnamese barbecued pork sandwich called *banh mi*, hearty Cubano

sandwiches and, above all, panini. First introduced in restaurants, these contemporary sandwiches have made the jump to home tables. The appeal of panini is more than convenience—when grilled or toasted, they add up to a hot meal. And they can be varied endlessly, giving people a chance to try a new bread, deli item or condiment. Meal-worthy sandwiches can go solo, or pair off with soup or a mixed salad.

One of Chef David Burke's favorites is [Grilled Cheese and Prosciutto di Parma Panini](#) with silky slices of Prosciutto di Parma flanked by slices of provolone cheese. If you don't have a panini maker, crisp it in a skillet or toaster oven.

Another source of inspiration for home cooks might be the superb panini served at chef Tom Colicchio's 'wichcraft restaurants in New York City and other locations. One of the most popular combos is turkey, avocado and crisp bacon on a ciabatta roll, with balsamic onion relish and aioli providing the flavor kick. Another great panino is the "Milanese" on the menu at Emporio Rulli, in the San Francisco Bay area, which calls for slices of prosciutto from Parma and Asiago from the Veneto to be layered with fresh spinach leaves on tapenade-spread focaccia.



## HOME PLATE



### SO GOOD: PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA WITH SEASONAL FRUIT

Prosciutto di Parma and fragrant, juicy melon have everything we want in a warm-weather dish: The flavors are a perfect fit, the prep time is practically nil and it's served at room temperature.

There are lots of ways to vary this classic. Make "carpaccio" by cutting the melon in paper thin slices rather than wedges; skewer Prosciutto di Parma-wrapped melon cubes to serve as hors d'oeuvres or pack in the picnic hamper; or add something new to the

familiar combo, such as [Prosciutto di Parma with Melon and Arugula](#) dressed in lemon vinaigrette. Prosciutto di Parma also teams up wonderfully with fresh figs, peaches and plums. For instance, serve the ham with warm plums lightly glazed with sugar, Gorgonzola-topped crostini and walnuts.

More seasonal ideas:

- Lightly brush kiwi slices, strawberries and/or mango or pineapple chunks with a lemon juice-honey mixture. Skewer the fruit, weaving strips of Prosciutto di Parma around them. Serve just as they are or grill briefly.
- Top raisin-walnut bread cut in triangles with goat cheese or mascarpone, thin peach slices and Prosciutto di Parma strips.
- Wrap crisp bread sticks with Prosciutto di Parma. Serve with apple or pear slices and Brie.



## CHEF TALK: FABIO TRABOCCHI

*Fabio Trabocchi, the new chef of Fiamma Osteria in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood, has introduced a menu based on the foods of his native region, Le Marche. He is the author of *Cucina of Le Marche: A Chef's Treasury of Recipes from Italy's Last Culinary Frontier* (HarperCollins, 2006).*

Q: What do you love about the foods of Le Marche?

A: From a gastronomic viewpoint, there are a tremendous variety of ingredients to play with: great seafood, good beef and game, truffles, artichokes and other produce. Ancona was always a major port so there was sea traffic but for multiple reasons, including the mountains, the region was secluded and the cuisine developed independently.

Q: Where did your culinary education begin?

A: My father was a farmer when I was growing up, and a good cook--from him, I gained a tremendous respect for food.

Q: Prosciutto di Parma comes from Emilia-Romagna, to the northwest of Le Marche. Did you eat it when you were growing up?

A: Yes, but having the opportunity to savor it was for special occasions. When I was small, my Aunt Lina let me help make a dish that calls for layering Prosciutto di Parma with fillets of red mullet, a Mediterranean fish. We used a lot of prosciutto because my routine was to eat a slice almost every time I placed one on the fish! Eventually, once I got myself into wearing a white jacket, I could have Prosciutto di Parma any time I wanted.

Q: Prosciutto di Parma is used in many of your recipes, including soups.



A: That's right. In Italy there's always a debate about the best part—the center, end or side, but the truth is that every part is used. The center slices are perfect for the fish dish. You can slowly render the fat in a clay pot to use as a base for soup. The end, which we call the *gambuccio*, has an intense flavor, whether you throw a chunk into a soup or finely dice it. And the bone, added to a bean soup, produces a great flavor.

Chef Trabocchi's [Baked Red Mullet Stuffed with Prosciutto and Sage](#) is adapted with permission from his *Cucina of Le Marche* (HarperCollins, 2006).

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